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NEWS

FROM YOUR MUSEUM

THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

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ONTARIO COAL

"Interest is being renewed in the only Ontario deposit of coal," stated Dr. E. S. Moore of the Royal Ontario Museum, "now that our overburdened transportation systems are experiencing difficulty in carrying more distant fuel."

He stated that coal might be mined at Onakawana, a lonely station, situated 70 miles south of James Bay. Although the coal is of low rank—lignite, to be exact, there are more than 100 million tons available. It was formed through the accumulation of vegetal matter in swamps of the Cretaceous period, about 75 million years ago. There is a weak, porous covering of sands and clays which must be first removed by power shovels. Then the lignite can be mined from open pits as in western Canada. One drawback to this potential fuel is the content of nearly 50% moisture, which not only reduces its heating qualities but also causes slaking on exposure to air. The methods that have been worked out to eliminate much of the water content involve drying with steam or heating to a char. An exhibit of raw and treated lignite is on view at the Royal Ontario Museum.

SNOW-SNAKES

Perhaps you think snow-snakes belong to lumber-jack legends. They are real. If you want to see one, visit the Royal Ontario Museum, but don't search for it in the collection of reptiles; look among the Indian articles.

A snow-snake is a long, thin, smoothed stick, oval in cross-section, with a sharp point, sometimes tipped with metal. The length is about ten feet, the width two inches, and the thickness one half inch. It is used in a favourite game of the Iroquois who throw it across the snow. In loose snow it leaves a snake-trail depression. Contestants see who can throw it farthest. A skilful thrower can make a "snake" go slithering a long way, particularly if the snow is crusted. Distance is more important than direction. This game calls for dexterity and keenness of eye, as well as a good deal of physical strength. Throwing snow-snakes is one of the oldest Canadian winter games.

BATTLE-GROUND THROUGH THE AGES

International war in Egypt is an old story, according to archaeologists in the Royal Ontario Museum. More than 3000 years before Christ, primitive Egypt was invaded time and again by peoples better organized for fighting. Gradually, the growth of a strong, highly organized civilization insured freedom from invasion for about 2000 years. At last, about 1000 B.C., internal decay and the rise of competing powers brought on another thousand years of invasion, ending with absorption into the Graeco-Roman world. During the 2000 years of the Christian era, Egypt never regained complete independence, and has experienced many battles between rival empires.

NATIVE WARS IN NEW GUINEA

War is nothing new in New Guinea. The natives there may consider bombs and cannon something of a novelty but the general idea of subduing the other fellow has long been put in practice. If you stand in front of a certain case in the Royal Ontario Museum, you can be introduced, painlessly, to the brand of weapons used by natives. Bows, arrows and spears are their principal armaments.

Native wars, in the interior plateau region, which is outside white man's government control, are fierce and frequent, according to Dr. R. F. Fortune, anthropologist. He states that, "In effect, the native population is divided into many small 'countries'. Some occupy an area of less than a square mile. Two or more 'countries' become allied against each other when disputes arise leading to war, so that armies up to one thousand men may be involved."

"In peace time," continued Dr. Fortune, "people of these different 'countries' dance and feast together, and intermarry. This leads to complications when war comes, making certain rules necessary. A man is expected to fight against his brother-in-law but first cousins are given neutrality. In spite of rules for fighting native wars," stated Dr. Fortune, "records indicate that half the deaths of both men and women are due to war."

Certainly war is nothing new in New Guinea!

YOUR MUSEUM

More people have visited the Royal Ontario Museum during the past year than in any previous year of its history. The Museum's use as an educational and recreational centre has increased in wartime.

NEW WORK OF A MUSEUM ARTIST

A book just published by the American Wildlife Institute, Washington, D.C., brings credit to Canadian talent. The author, F. H. Kortright, a Canadian sportsman-naturalist, deals with the ducks, geese and swans of North America in an original and informative way. The book is superbly illustrated by T. M. Shortt, Artist-Associate in the Division of Birds, of the Royal Ontario Museum. Mr. Shortt is pre-eminent among the younger Canadian bird illustrators and an outstanding ornithologist. He has done scientific work for the Museum, in connection with its Ontario faunal surveys, in Manitoba, the eastern Arctic, and Alaska.

MUSEUM HOURS

When in Toronto you will find the Museum open free from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and on Sundays from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. As a war measure it is closed on Mondays. There is a 15c. admission on Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.